

A N
E N Q U I R Y
I N T O T H E
O c c a s i o n a l C o n f o r m i t y
O F
D I S S E N T E R S,
I N
Cases of Preferment.

W I T H A
P R E F A C E t o t h e L O R D M A Y O R,
O c c a s i o n e d b y h i s c a r r y i n g t h e
S w o r d t o a C O N V E N T I C L E.

Daniel Defoe

If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him, 1 Kings 18. 21.

L O N D O N:
P r i n t e d A n n o D o m. 1 6 9 7.

1010-1011

1

My LORD,

I Know not that the following Sheets will at all affect Your Lordship, for I cannot say, That Your Lordship did Communicate with the Dissenters before, or does with the Church now; nor does it Import much whether you did either. The Discourse is not meant for a Satyr on Your Lordship, nor upon any Man else; neither has it any Double Aspect, but directly Points at the Fact, which whether it be a Crime or not, let their Consciences judge, who know themselves Guilty.

My Lord, the Step Your Lordship made into the Chair, had something in it of Surprize, and Your Management of it has more. The Figure Your Lordship made, when You were the Man whom the King delighted to Honour, was very Magnificent; and we find, that since that, Your Lordship does not bear the Sword in vain.

A 2

I bear

The Preface.

I bear Your Lordship Testimony, That I never heard any Man reflect, either on Your Lordship's Morals or Management, (since Your being Lord Mayor) save only in the Matter of Pinners Hall: And since no body has opened their Mouths on Your Lordship's Behalf, I humbly crave leave to be Your Lordship's Advocate in one Point. One Principal Allegation against Your Lordship, is, That You forced the Pious, Conscientious Mr. M----- to the Meeting-house, and there enclos'd him, nolens volens, contrary to the true Intent and Meaning of an Act of Parliament, in that Case made and provided, Entitled, An Act for Liberty of Conscience, &c. And that at the same time, Your Lordship caused the Sword (that very Individual Sword, that had the Honour to be carri'd so far before the King) even the City Sword of State, to be carried to a Conventicle or Meeting-house, call'd Pinners Hall.

My Lord, I own the Fact in Your Lordship's behalf, that Your Lordship's Sword and Sword-Bearer was there; and I can find out but two Clauses in which Your Lordship can be charg'd with a Mistake.

The Preface.

One is in forcing that Good Man against his Conscience. Liberty of Conscience is a thing, that Gentleman, I confess, never was fond of. But since 'tis now become every Subjects right, 'tis hard Your Lordship should refuse it Mr. M-----.

But now, My Lord, I must crave the freedom to inform Your Lordship, That Mr. M----, and Your Lordship, are exactly under the same Predicaments as to Liberty; for if Your Lordship has, against his Will, oblig'd him to go to Pinners-Hall; Your Lordship seems in as large a measure to be impos'd upon, in being oblig'd to go to the Cathedral Worship of St. Paul's.

Till Your Lordship arriv'd at the Magnitude You now sit in, You never suffer'd Your Self to be abridg'd of Your Liberty; and shall Your Power be Great in every thing, but in the Management of Your self?

My Lord, either Your Profession before was Bad or Good: if it was Bad, Your Lordship does well to alter it, and would do better to do so wholly. If 'twas Good, why does Your Lordship alter it at all? But I beg leave of Your Lordship to consider how 'twas possible to be both Good and Bad

The Preface.

too? That Your Lordship should Worship God one way in the Morning, and another in the Afternoon. My Lord, Your Elevated Station places You above the Fear of Man, and he that is above Fear, is above Shame. If Your former Profession was Good, Your Lordship need never be asham'd of it: If 'twas Bad, You need not be asham'd to mend it, for no wise Man is asham'd of growing wiser.

Humane Politicks seldom agree with Nice Consciences; and if I could entertain such base Thoughts, as to believe Your Lordship designs by this to gain Parties, and make both Your Friends; I would think it also needful to assure Your Lordship, that by it You will most effectually lose both Parties; but Your Lordship is wiser than to need that Admonition. Your Lordship never was a Trimmer in Your life, and certainly You won't Trim it with Your Maker.

I neither press Your Lordship to go to Church or Meeting, but to use the Authority Man has given you to procure Your self the freedom of using the Judgment God has given You; That honest Mr. M----- may have his Liberty, and Your Lordship Your own.

We

The Preface.

We were in hopes when Your Lordship first appear'd in the Quire at Paul's, that you were effectually convinced of your former Error, as a Dissenter; and that Noble Quire should have been grac'd at its first Opening with so Noble a Convert as Your Lordship; but since we find Your Lordship is pleas'd to practice such Latitudinarian Principles, as to be a Conformist in the Morning, and a Nonconformist before Night; it puts us upon considering what this new sort of a Religion that looks two ways at once, means.

The following Sheets, if Your Lordship should give Your self the trouble of reading them, will directly point out to Your Lordship what is meant by this blunt Preface. In short, That the Church or the Meeting-house, is the Place where Your Lordship may Worship, but that both Church and Meeting house, at the same time, is preposterous, Derogatory to the Character of Your Lordship's Wisdom, a Scandal upon the Grandeur of the Principal Magistrate of the City; and a slight put upon God himself, as if Your Lordship were very indifferent which way you did it, and consequently, whether you did it all, or not.

Your

The Preface.

Your Lordship sits in a Chair of Great Authority, and the Respect due to You is Great, and Your Example is very significant. Wherefore 'tis the Author's humble Request to Your Lordship, That You will be pleas'd to consider, whether the Example Your Lordship now sets us, is such as You would really advise any body to follow, and if not, I have no more to say to the Matter; But that I am,

Your Lordship's

Most Humble Servant,

One, Two, Three, Four.

A
DISCOURSE
UPON

Occasional Conformity.



WHEN I review the Past Times, and look back upon the various Scenes, which they present us as to Ecclesiastical Transactions within this Kingdom, there seems nothing more strange than the Turns we have had from Popish to Regal Supremacy, from the *Romish* Religion to Reform'd, from Reform'd back again to *Romish*, and then to Reform'd again, and so on through several Degrees of Reformation, and back again from those Degrees to the first Steps of Reformation, and then forward again.

King *Henry* the 8th, a Prince of a haughty Spirit, disdaining the Insolence with which his Predecessors were treated by the Popes,

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gave

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gave the first Shock to the *Roman Power* in these Kingdoms. I won't say he acted from any Principles of Conscience, whatever his Ambition and Interest led him to pretend; but *that*, as it is in most Cases of Publick Revolutions, was the Gloss; however it was, having satisfi'd his Pride by subduing the Supremacy of the Pope, and establishing his own; his Interest next guided him to the Suppression of Abbies and Monasteries; the horrible Vices which were protected, as well as practised in those Nests of Superstition, giving his pretence of Piety the larger Scope; and I'll for once be so free with the Character of that Prince, as to suppose what to me seems plain, that *neither This Religion, or That, were of much moment in his thoughts, but his Interest*, as the Sequel made plain, by the Seizure he made of the Revenues of the Church. And yet the Justice of Providence seem'd very conspicuous in that point, That those Houses who under the specious pretences of Religion and extraordinary Devotion, had amassed to themselves vast Revenues to the Impoverishing many Families, and in the mean time practised secretly most unheard-of Wickedness, should under the same pretence of Zeal and Piety be suppressed

pressed and impoverished by a Person, who merely to serve his own Glory, triumph'd over them, pretending, *Jehu* like, to *shew* his Zeal for the Lord.

Some do assure us, That the Eyes of this Prince were really open'd as to the Point of Religion; and that had he liv'd longer, he wou'd most effectually have establiſh'd the Reformation in his time; but God, who gave him that light, *if he had it*, however he might accept his Intention, as he did that of *David's* building his House, yet he reserv'd the Glory of the Performance to his Son.

King *Edward* the 6th, of whom wondrous things are spoken in all our *English* Writers, and more than we need suppose should be literally true; yet was, without doubt, a Prince of the strictest Piety, not only that ever reign'd, but that ever liv'd, perhaps, since the Days of *Josiah*, whose Parallel our Writers say he was.

The Reformation began in his hand; not but that the Protestant Religion had been receiv'd in *England* many years before, by the preaching of *John Wickliff*, *William Tindall*, and others, and had many Professors, and those such, who gallantly offer'd their Lives in defence of the Truth.

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But it got but little ground ; for Religion has but few Votaries, while all its Professors must also be Confessors, and while Exile or Martyrdom is all the present prospect of advantage to be got by it.

None will dare to be Dissenters in times of Danger, but such whose Consciences are so awaken'd that they dare not be otherwise.

But in the Hands of this young Prince, the great Work was begun, and in a shorter time than could be imagin'd, was finish'd and establish'd; the *Romanists* fled or conform'd; for we find but very few had any Inclination to Martyrdom if it had been put upon them. Some indeed to show the Nature of their Religion, *Pleaded for Baal, and rebell'd*, stirring up the Ignorant People to Murther their *Gideon*, for throwing down the *Altars of Baal*; but like the *Ephramites* of old, their *Shiboleth* was their undoing.

God, who thought fit to discover the Levity of those who had only Conform'd, and not Reform'd, who, *in exemplum Regis*, had took up this as they wou'd have done any Religion, and also for the Tryal and Glory of his Church, suffer'd all this great Fabrick, *however of his own Working*, to be overthrown at the Death of this
good

good King, and a Deluge of Cruelty and Popery overwhelm'd the People in the Reign of the Queen, his Sister.

But Popery found more Dissenters than the Reformation had done, and the Impression Religion had made on the Minds of those who had sincerely Embrac'd it, was not so easily Defac'd as the pretended Reformation of Others; for the Glosses men had put on their Actions, only as a Cover from common Observation, was soon discover'd, when the Safety of owning their Old Principles render'd those Outsides no longer needful; but where the True Religion had got footing in the Mind, it was still the same, whatever Alterations of Times might make it Dangerous; and yet all People did not burn; but some being persecuted in one City, fled to another; and Germany especially was a Sanctuary for the Distressed English Protestants, that Country having been before-hand with us in the Reformation.

'Twas here that our Exil'd Clergy having Convers'd with the Learned Reformers abroad, and particularly with *John Calvin*, found, that tho they were reform'd indeed from the Gross Errors of Popery and Superstition, there was yet several things

things which might be further and further re-form'd; and being willing to arrive to the greatest Perfection they were capable of in Religion, (that as near as possible they might pursue the Great Example of Christ Jesus, whose Name they profess'd, and for whom they could most gloriously die), they corrected in themselves those things which they saw needful, and by Letters to their Brethren in *England* communicated their Opinions, with their Reasons, exhorting them to go on unto perfection as they had begun.

Some of the most Zealous for Piety and Holiness of Life, rejected this Motion; and Others as Zealous and Pious, clos'd with it; and the Disputes were carried so far sometimes, as to invade the Charity of one another; an humble Acknowledgment of which you have in a most Christian Reconciling Letter from Bishop *Ridley* to Bishop *Hooper*, two of the most Glorious Triumphant Martyrs that ever confest the Truth of Christ at the Stake.

For the present, the Fire of the Persecution, (as the Greater Light obscures the Less), extinguish'd that of Dissention. But when Queen *Elizabeth* rescu'd the Protestant Religion, and the Church enjoy'd its Peace again, the Debate
reviv'd:

reviv'd : But the first Establishment of King *Edward* obtain'd so on the Minds of men, that the further Reformation was rejected ; the other Party being not at all convinc'd, tho' over-rul'd, submitted their Persons to the Laws, but not their Opinion ; affirming, "That 'twas the Duty
"of every Christian, to endeavour to serve God
"with the greatest Purity of Worship that was
"possible ; and that this was the Purest Worship
"which came nearest to the Divine Institution,
"which they believ'd the Establish'd Liturgy did
"not, and therefore in Conscience they must be
"Dissenters.

It must be own'd, That the Original Authors of these Disputes were Learned, Devout, and singularly Pious, strict in Conversation to excess, *if that be possible*, and from thence, in a sort of happy Derision, were call'd *Puritans* ; of whom I shall say nothing, but leave for a Record the last Speech of a Famous Foreigner, who had seen the way of living among those Dissenters, and speaking of the Words of *Balaam*, *Let me dye the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his*, cry'd Out,

Sit Anima Mea cum Puritanis Anglicanis.

I shall

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I shall not take upon me to observe the Difference between these Primitive Dissenters and Our Present, which is too plain ; nor to dispute the Substance of the Point in Debate between them and the Establish'd National Church.

I shall only observe, That the Reasons for the present Dissenters Separation from the Establish'd Church, are said to be exactly the same they were then ; and the present Dissenters are the Successors of those first, as the present Conformists are the Successors of the first Reformers under King *Edward the Sixth*, and Queen *Elizabeth*.

I must acknowledge, that it fares with the Church of *England*, and with the Dissenters both, as it has always far'd with Christ's Church in the whole World ; That while Suppress'd and Persecuted, their Professors were few, and their Profession more severe ; but when a Religion comes to be the Mode of the Country, so many painted Hypocrites get into the Church, who are not by their Voices to be distinguish'd, that Guile is not to be seen, till it arrive to Apostacy. The whole Ecclesiastical History, from the first Century of the Christian Church, is full of Instances to confirm this, That the Prosperity of the Church of Christ has been more
fatal

fatal to it, than all the Persecution of its Enemies.

I am now brought down to the present Time, when the Dissenting Protestant is sheltered by the Laws, and protected from the Violence which he suffered in the Late Reigns, under the Arbitrary Commands of such State-Ministers who strove to dash the whole Protestant Interest to pieces by its own weight: And nothing is more apparent to those who are any thing acquainted with the late Management of Affairs in this Land, than that the Court used both Parties alternately, as Policy and Occasion directed, to Suppress and Destroy one another; that the whole House, *which being so divided, cou'd not stand*, might at last fall of it self.

But our Eyes are at last open'd, and the Name of Protestant is now the common Title of an *Englishman*, and the Church of *England* extends her Protection to the Tender Consciences of her Weaker Brethren, knowing that all may be Christians, tho' not alike inform'd; and the Dissenter extends his Charity to the Church of *England*, believing that in his due time *God shall reveal even this unto them*. If this is not, I wish this were the Temper of both Parties; and I am sure it is already the

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Temper

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Temper of some of each Side, and those few are of the Wisest, most Pious, and most Judicious.

But while Frailty and Infirmary is an Essential to Humanity, and Pride and Hypocrisy are the two Regnant Vices of the Church, this Good Spirit cannot be Universal, and we do not expect it.

But there is a sort of Truth which all men owe to the Principles they profess; and generally speaking, all men pay it; a *Turk* is a *Turk* zealously and entirely; an *Idolater* is an *Idolater*, and will serve the Devil to a tittle: None but Protestants halt between *God and Baal*; Christians of an Amphibious Nature, that have such Preposterous Consciences, that can believe one Way of Worship to be right, and yet serve God another way themselves; *This is a strange thing in Israel.* The whole History of Religions in the World do not shew such a Case: 'Tis like a Ship with her Sails hal'd some back, and some full: 'Tis like a Workman, that builds with one Hand, and pulls down with t'other: 'Tis like a Fisherman, that catches Fish with one hand, and throws them into the Sea with another: 'Tis like every thing that signifies nothing. To say a man
can

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11

can be of two Religions, is a Contradiction, unless there be two Gods to worship, or he has two Souls to save.

Religion is the Sacred Profession of the Name of God; *serving him, believing in him, expecting from him*; and like the God it refers to, 'tis in one and the same Object, one and the same thing perfectly indivisible and inseparable; there is in it no Neuter Gender, no Ambiguous Article, *God or Baal*; Mediums are impossible.

As to the different Modes and Ways, which are the Circumstantials of this Sacred Thing I call Religion; I won't say, but that as Ships take different Courses at Sea, yet to the best of their Skill, keeping to the direct Rules of Navigating by the Compass, they may arrive at the same Port; so Christians taking different Methods in the serving this God, yet going to the best of their Judgments by the direct Rules of the Scripture, may arrive at the same Heaven; *but this is nothing at all to the Case*; for no Ship would arrive at any Port, that sailed two ways together, *if that were possible*; nor no man can serve One God, and at the same time hold two Opinions. There is but one Best, and he that gives God *two Bests*, gives him the Best and

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the Worst, and one spoils t'other, till both are good for nothing.

I have said already, that both the Church of England, and the Dissenter, suffer in their Reputation for the mixt Multitude of their Members, which is occasion'd by their present Prosperity: If a Third Party were to tyrannize over them both, we should see then who were *Professors*, and who were *Confessors*; but now it cannot be: Wherefore, I think 'twere well to put both Sides in mind of one thing, which they are bound mutually to observe; and that is, That the *Personal Miscarriages* of any particular Person or Member, is not really any *Reflection upon the Religion they profess*, nor ought not to be so accounted, unless it be where such Miscarriages are the direct Dictates of the Doctrines they teach; and thus I would be understood in the present Case. Wherefore I shall give my Essay as to what I understand a Real Dissenting Protestant is, or ought to be.

He who Dissents from an Establish'd Church on any account, but from a real Principle of Conscience, is a Politick, not a Religious Dissenter. To explain my self; He who Dissents from any other Reasons, but such as these, That he firmly believes the said Established Church

Church is not of the purest Institution, but that he can really serve God more agreeable to his Will, and that accordingly 'tis his Duty to do it so, *and no otherwise*. Nay, he that cannot Dye, or at least desire to do so, rather than Conform, *ought to Conform*. Schism from the Church of Christ is, doubtless, a great Sin, and if I can avoid it, I ought to avoid it, but if not, the Cause of that Sin carries the Guilt with it.

But if I shall thus Dissent, and yet at the same time Conform; by Conforming I deny my Dissent being lawful, or by my Dissenting I damn my Conforming as sinful.

Nothing can be lawful and unlawful at the same time; if it be not lawful for me to Dissent, I ought to Conform; but if it be unlawful for me to Conform, I must Dissent; several Opinions may at the same time consist in a Country, in a City, in a Family, but not in one entire Person, *that is impossible*.

To come to the point; there are Dissenters who have separated from the Church of *England*, and join'd in Communion with Dissenting Churches or Congregations. They have appear'd Zealous, Conscientious, and Constant; have born the Reproaches and Inconveniencies
of

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of their Party, nay, suffer'd Persecution, and Loss of Estates and Liberty for the Cause: And who could have so little Charity as to doubt the Sincerity of their Profession? And yet these Persecuted, Suffering Dissenters, to make themselves room in the Publick Advancements, and Glittering Gawdy Honours of the Age, shall Conform to that which they refus'd under all those Disadvantages to do before. And which is worse than all this; hear O Heavens! as soon as the present Honour is attain'd, the present Advantage made, they return to the former Circumstance again, and are freely receiv'd, *a double Crime*, as having done no Evil.

I know not, I profess, what these Persons can say for themselves, and therefore cannot pretend to Answer their Objections; but I cannot omit one Answer which some People give for them, *viz. That this is no Conformity in Point of Religion, but done as a Civil Action*, in Obedience to the Laws of the Land, which have made it a necessary Characteristick Quality, for admittance into Publick Employments, which they think it their Duty to accept, in order to serve their Country, which they doubly perform by executing those Offices to the Publick Interest, and by excluding those

those who would otherwise get into those Places, and betray their Country and their Liberties.

I have never met with any considerable Excuse made for this fast and loose Game of Religion, but this, and this I desire to consider a little particularly.

1. *That this is no Conformity in Point of Religion, but done as a Civil Action.* How this can be possible, remains to be determined. 'Tis true, the Morality of an Action consists in its End; but I cannot conceive that an Action purely and originally Religious, such as the Solemn Ordinances of God's Worship, can be made Civil Actions by any End, Design, Will, or Intention of Man whatsoever. 'Tis true, an Oath, which is a calling God to witness, is an Action both Civil and Religious, but still that was appointed and instituted to that end, as is expressly noted, *Heb.*

Naaman's bowing in the House of *Rimon*; to which the Prophet answered, *Go in peace*, which is understood as a permission, is a thing still different; for *Naaman* only bowed for the Conveniency or State of the King, at the same time publicly disowning the Worship, as *Interpreters* are of Opinion; besides, bowing the Head,

Head, though it may be a customary Act of Worship at that place, yet is no Act confin'd to Worship only, and instituted and directed so by the God who is Worshipp'd, but is an Act us'd in Common Salutations. Thus we kneel to God, and to the King; but Sacraments are things appropriated by the Divine Institution of God himself, as things which have no other Signification or Import but what is Divine: Had *Naaman* desir'd to be excused in offering Sacrifices to the Idol *Rimmon*, the Prophet would hardly have bid him go in peace. Some Actions are not Civil or Religious, as they are Civilly or Religiously perform'd, but as they are Civil or Religious in themselves; for some Religious Actions are so entirely such, that they cannot without a horrid Invasion of the Sovereignty of the Institutor be appropriated to any other use, and such are in especial manner, the Two Sacraments instituted by Christ; such was, before Christ, the Sacrifices by Fire; And the Judgments of God on *Nadab* and *Abihu*, for attempting to offer Sacrifice with strange Fire, stands as a terrible Instance of what we ought to think is the Will of God in this matter.

Further

Further, speaking directly of the Sacraments, Are they not the same thing, though differently Administred in the Establish'd Church, or in a Dissenting Church; and how can you take it as a Civil Act in one place, and a Religious Act in another? This is *playing Bo-peep* with God Almighty, and no man can tell of them when they are about a Civil Action, and when about a Religious. But to answer this pretence at once, Sacraments as Sacraments are Religious Acts, and can be no other; if you do not take it as a Sacrament, the Case differs; but how can you say you do not take it as a Sacrament; an Oath is to be taken in the Sense of the Imposer; and a Sacrament, which is a Recognition of the most Sacred of Oaths, must be also taken in the Sense of the Imposer; if the Person Administring declar'd at the Administration, *He did not give it as a Sacrament, but only gave you a bit of Bread, and a draught of Wine as a Friend, or the like*, this was something; but can a Minister deliver the Bread to you, and say, *The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, &c.* and you kneeling with Reverence take it as such, and repeat the Responses at the Communion, and say *Amen* to the Prayer, and say 'tis a Civil
D Action.

Action. This is such Bantering with Religion, as no Modest Christian can think of without Horror.

2. Another Part of the Apology is, That without it they cannot be admitted into Publick Places of Trust; and if they are not admitted, such will get in as will betray their Country and Liberties, and they do it purely to secure their Country, which they think their Duty.

These are Patriots that will damn their Souls to save their Country; a sort of a Publick Spirit hardly to be found in the World, and indeed a Non-entity in it self; for 'tis a Mistake; the Gentlemen who make this Answer, put the Case wrong. For I would desire such to Answer a few Questions.

If the Service of their Country be so dear to them, pray why should they not chuse to expose their Bodies and Estates for that Service, rather than their Souls; the Penalty of the Law in accepting the Publick Employments is wholly Pecuniary; the difference lies here, *they chuse the Trespassing on their Consciences, before the hazard of their Estates, as the least Evil; for 'tis plain, any Man who will suffer the Penalty, or run the Risque of it, which is*
all

all one, may excuse the Conformity : For the Law does not say you shall so and so Conform, but if you do not Conform, you shall incur such and such Penalties ; any Man that will incur the Penalty, may commit the Trespas.

So that all this Compliance is not, To be admitted to Places, that they may be able to serve their Country, but to save the Five hundred pounds, and other Penalties of that Act.

2. Why, if we believe the Power of God to be Omnipotent, should we imagine that he is not able to protect our Country and Liberties, without our perpetrating so wicked an Act to secure them, *as doing Evil that Good may come*, which is expressly forbidden ?

But we are told again, This is in it self no Sinful Act, and therefore it is not doing Evil. This is tacitly answered before ; tho 'tis not a Sinful Act in it self, yet 'tis either a Sinful Act in a Dissenter, or else his Dissenting before was a Sinful Act. For if he is satisfied he does well in Conforming now, why did he not before ? There is but one Answer for that, which is, He is otherwise convinced ; to which I reply, If that

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were true, he would then as a Convert continue in this New Communion; but 'tis evident the same Persons return immediately to the former Profession as Dissenters, and they can have no such Excuse, unless it be, that they were convinc'd, and reconvinc'd, and then convinc'd again.

Some have the Folly to argue against the Law it self, as a most Notorious Imposition upon the Consciences of Men, by making the Sacred Institutions of Christ a Drudge to Secular Interest, and a Cause of mens Sins, by leading them into Temptation. I could say enough to vindicate that part, tho I am no more reconcil'd to that Law, than other Men, but 'tis remote to our Argument: 'Tis an Act of Parliament, and what is so, is of every Man's own doing, and therefore 'tis just every one shou'd comply with the Terms, or suffer the Penalty; but here is no Penalty, if no Crime; *if no Preferments are sought, no Honours accepted, there is no Crime*; if Self-denial was as practicable as Self-advancement, here is no need of the Crime. So that they who do this, *seek the Crime, that is the first Sin; then Mortgage their Consciences to avoid the Penalty,* and so add one Sin to another. But we are told

told by some, 'tis not against their Consciences, they hope both Parties are Good Christians; there are Differences between them which they don't understand nor meddle with, and their Consciences are very well satisfied to Communicate with either.

I would ask such, if their Consciences would serve to Communicate with the Church, why did they Separate? For Communicating with the Dissenter, is not an Occasional or Casual Thing, but an open declar'd breaking off from the Church Establish't. Now no Man can be said to Separate from, and Joyn to a thing at the same time; if your Conscience is satisfied in Joyning, it cannot be satisfied in Separating, unless you can suppose your Conscience to be satisfied and dissatisfied both together. If you have a Conscience of any Religion at all, it must be of some Religion or other; if of this, it cannot be of that; if of that, it cannot be of this: To Dissent and Approve, are different Acts, and can never be fixt upon the same Object at the same time; as for a Man, Passively Religious, that can Communicate any where, that Man may from the same Principle, and with far less guilt Communicate no where, for such a Man, in down right *English*, has prostituted

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tuted the little Religion he had, *if ever he had any*, to his Interest, and may be *Turk, Jew, Papist*, or any thing.

The latter part of the Charge leads me to consider another Point, which relates to the Assemblies of the Dissenters, who admit, and by consequence approve this way of proceeding. I do not pretend to examine by what Methods such particular Churches do proceed. And I would be as tender as possible in making Reflections. I wish they would be as Charitable in censuring this Reproof.

I do think, with Submission, 'tis impossible to prove that any Person, whose Case the foregoing Paragraph reaches, can be receiv'd again into Church-Communion in a Dissenting Assembly upon any other Terms, *than as a Penitent*. I have heard of some, who have been said to have leave from their Ministers for this Matter; *if so*, they have assum'd some *Dispensing Authority*, which I believe does not appertain to the Ministerial Function, nor is not contain'd in the Mission of our Saviour. But I do not affirm, That any such thing has been really allow'd.

As to the Relation of Churches, and the Members thereof, one to another, as the Dissenters

senters now Establish them ; I am sure, the allowance of any Member in a Promiscuous Communion with the Church of *England* and the Dissenter at the same time, is not pretended to be allow'd, nor is it consistent with it self. 'Tis Preposterous, and Excentrick, and is Destructive of the very Foundation of the Dissenters Principles, as is already noted, concerning Schisms in the Church. In this Case, Charity can heal nothing, nor help nothing ; 'tis of absolute necessity that one Man be but of one side, at one and the same time. Either the Conformist will marr the Dissenter, or the Dissenter will marr the Conformist. For if I shall be admitted into the Communion of the Dissenter, and of the Church together ; then the Dissenter must have some other Reason for being a Dissenter, than Purity of Worship.

Methinks Men should seem what they are ; if a man Dissent from the Church, let him do so ; and his Principle being well-grounded for such Dissent, let him hold it ; if not well-grounded, let him leave it ; if he cannot suffer one way, let him suffer another ; and why should we not be as honest to God as our Country.

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A Discourse upon

The Motives to serve our Country are strong, but there are ways to do it without such a Violation of all our Principles and Profession; if not, trust God's Providence with the Issue, who never wants Agents to preserve and deliver his People when his time is at hand; and you can have small hope to expect that the Office and Trust you shall Execute, shall receive any Assistance from his Providence, when the first Step into it, is made by offering the greatest Affront to his Honour, and committing the vilest Act of Perfidy in the World.

But if the gay Prospect of a Great Place, tempt any Person beyond the Power that God's Grace is pleas'd to Assist him with, *in that way let him abide*, and not be re-admitted, because of his Gold Ring and Fine Apparel, without a Penitent Acknowledgment. The Dissenters in *England*, can never pretend to be Dissenters upon the mere Principle of Purity of Worship, as I have related in the beginning of this Discourse, if such shall be receiv'd as blameless into their Communion, who have deserted them upon the occasion of Preferment, and have made the Sacred Institutions of Christ Jesus, become Pimps to their Secular Interest, and then wipe their
Mouths,

Mouths, and sit down in the Church, and say,
They have done no Evil.

'Tis also an Intolerable Affront to the Church of *England*, reflecting upon its Doctrine as well as Practice; To make use of the Church for a Cover to fence them against the Laws, at the same time continuing to disown its Communion, as a thing not fit to be continued in.

And yet the Church of *England* is in the right to receive such of the Dissenters as shall come to them, without the Ceremony of Recognition, because it is agreeable to the Notion of a National Church, which they profess to be. But Dissenters are bound to justify their Separation from them, or else their whole Constitution falls to the Ground. Now, how a Separation and a Conformity are Consistent, is to me an Inexplicable Riddle.

I question not here the Lawfulness of the Dissenters Separation; it is not the business of this Discourse to define it; and I am as careful as I can in making Reflections upon either; but I am bold to affirm, That no Dissenting Church can with lawful Cause Separate from the Church of *England*, Establish Private Churches or Communions, and at the same

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times

times allow the Members to Conform to the Establish'd Church too: This is incongruous, and one must destroy the other. From whence I think it becomes the Dissenters, if they would maintain the Doctrine they teach; if they would have us believe they Dissent purely on the honest Principles of Conscience, and Purity of Worship, with such a one, *No, not to Eat*. And it is not sufficient that the Offender be a Lord Mayor, or any Greater Person; unless he would be Lord Mayor without a Breach of the Sacred Relation he had entred into, he should be dealt with in that Case, as the meanest Member of such a Society.

On the other hand, if a Man be call'd upon to be a Magistrate, and has Courage enough to follow the Impartial Dictates of his Conscience, a Query lies before him, What shall he do?

The Case is plain; *Either refuse the Honour, or run the Risque*; the first indeed is the plainest and easiest Way, and the Ground of it is good, for he whose Conscience Dictates to him that the Terms are Sinful, may refuse the Call; for Preferments and Honours are a Bait that some have refus'd on mere Points of Speculative Philosophy; and 'tis hard, Christianity should not carry a Man as far. Well, but
perhaps

Occasional Conformity.

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perhaps a Man has a mind to be a Sheriff and Lord Mayor, and is a Dissenter; or perhaps he really thinks 'tis his Indispensible Duty to serve his Country, if he is call'd to that, or the like Office; or perhaps he thinks 'tis a Duty he owes his Family, to advance his Children, and the like, and he is a Profest Dissenter; What shall he do? Let him boldly run the Risque, or openly and honestly Conform to the Church, and neither be asham'd of his Honour, nor of his Profession; such a Man all Men will Value, and God will Own: He need not fear carrying the Sword to a Conventicle, or bringing the Conventicle to his own House. But to make the matter a Game, to dodge Religions, and go in the Morning to Church, and in the Afternoon to the Meeting; to Communicate in private with the Church of *England*, to save a Penalty, and then go back to the Dissenters and Communicate again there: This is such a Retrograde Devotion, that I can see no Colour of pretence for in all the Sacred Book.

I have heard, indeed, that some, who are Ministers of Dissenting Churches do, or did at the same time Communicate with the Church of *England*. I do not dispute how far a Minister may Conform as a Lay-man, tho' he cannot

cannot as a Clergy-man ; but how any Dissenting Minister can Conform as a Lay-man, and at the same time execute a Pastoral Charge over a Congregation, whom he teaches to Separate from the Church in a Lay-Communion, I cannot imagine.

'Tis not, as I have already noted, Conformity or Nonconformity, that I am discoursing ; but 'tis Conformity and Nonconformity at the same time, in one and the same Person, *that is the Point* ; and doing this for a Secular End, to save a Penalty, and privately ; and then, as being ashamed of it, to go back and sit down as not having done it at all ; and a Church Society admitting this without taking notice of it. These are the Contradictions I insist upon, and rather wish, than expect to see rectified.

F I N I S.

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A N S W E R
T O
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